

10. WAGTAILS AS PREDATORS OF FIELD BEAN APHIDS

Wagtails are essentially insectivorous birds preying on insects and other small arthropods. Toor and Ramzan (1975)¹ reported Wagtails as good predators of mustard aphid, *Lophaphis erysini* Kalt from Ludhiana.

We observed flocks of Wagtails feeding on the field bean aphid (*Aphis craccivora* Koch.) when we were screening the field bean germplasm to aphid resistance. The flock consisted mainly of the yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava* L.) and the Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla caspica* Gmelin). The field bean varieties (*Lablab niger* L.) were trained on to a pandal in about

¹ TOOR, H. S. AND RAMZAN, M., (1975): The Grey Wagtail, *Motacilla caspica* Gmelin—a good predator of Mustard aphid, *Lophaphis erysini* Kalt. *Sci. & Cult.*, 41 (6): 288.

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April 29, 1978.

20 × 15 sq. metre area, and the birds frequently visited the periphery of the plot. On detailed examination with 8 × 30 field glasses of the lowermost branches of the plant infested with aphids, it was ascertained that the birds fed on aphids. The birds also fed on aphide placed on a white paper kept on the ground near the plant, thus confirming the observation. Further, on close examination of the fed area, it was found that it had only the immature stages as compared to unfed areas where the aphid colony consisted of mature and immature forms, suggesting that the Wagtails fed mostly on adult and grown-up nymphs. Thus, it is inferred that the Wagtails play an important role in checking aphid build-up on field bean.

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11. REACTION TO NIGHT SPOTTING IN THE GHARIAL,
GAVIALIS GANGETICUS (GMELIN)

Light from a two-celled torch, held at the level of the eye, were thrown on captive hatchling and yearling gharials on various occasions. The eyes of all juveniles reflected a bright red glow when the yearlings were in water, they moved towards the light.

In line with gharial's body axis, the minimum distance from which the glow was perceived between 1.00 and 1.50 m for hatchlings about 50 cm long, and 1.75 and 2.00 m for yearlings over a metre. The glow could not be observed when the height of the light source was not lowered while nearing the animal. Because of obstructions the glow could not be

seen beyond 6 m in experiments with both hatchlings and yearlings. However, reflections from juveniles, released in the wild in the Satkeshia Gorge of the River Mahanadi, have been perceived from a distance of about 15 m.

Observations made on captive muggers (*Crocodylus palustris*) also showed exactly similar results.

Abdulali (1951) reported that gharials do not reflect torch light, which was contradicted by Ross (1975). Ross (1975) further contradicted Oliver's (Abdulali 1957) statement that in gharial the colour of the glow is "much fainter".